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Ain't My America: The Long, Noble History of Anti-War Conservatism and Middle-American Anti-Imperialism

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addition to the 1970s television series, there are pageants, plays, musicals, tours, pamphlets, and travel volumes. The publisher of the series has released new sequels, prequels, books that fill gaps in the story, and a multitude of merchandise tie-ins to the books. Fellman describes and analyzes these cultural artifacts sympathetically, explaining how those who love the series have interpreted and internalized the stories.

The burden of the book as a whole, however, is to argue that the Little House books contributed to the conservative resurgence of the 1980s and 1990s. Here she is attempting to support with evidence something that some western historians have suspected: that "this series of children's books . . . helped prepare the ground for a shift, in the late twentieth century, in the assumptions about the appropriate role for government. In turn, the entire political culture has been affected" (232). Fellman provides ample evidence for this assertion.

Wilder's life was almost wholly midwestern, so midwestern readers will learn about her life in Wisconsin, Kansas, Minnesota, Iowa, South Dakota, and Missouri. However, Fellman's canvas is national, not regional, so she does not address how the books may appeal in a special way to midwesterners. Those interested only in biographical information about Wilder will be better served by John Miller's *Becoming Laura Ingalls Wilder: The Woman Behind the Legend* (1998). Fellman's work will be of interest to mainly Wilder scholars and other academic historians. Little House enthusiasts will find that Fellman has listened to them well, but she challenges them to reconsider the antigovernment and individualist ideas conveyed by the books.

Ain't My America: The Long, Noble History of Anti-War Conservatism and Middle-American Anti-Imperialism, by Bill Kauffman. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2008. 281 pp. Notes, index. \$25.00 cloth.

In between delivering newspapers and Meals on Wheels, reviewer Bill Douglas ponders Iowa religious and political history from the near north side of Des Moines.

Bill Kauffman's America is one of small towns, isolationism, minding one's own business, and a patriotism based on human-scale values. In another word, Iowa. And although he comes from upstate New York, he has plenty to say about Iowans in this entertaining, enlightening, and (for this democratic socialist) unpersuasive book. Keep a dictionary handy, as Kauffman delights in the obscure word, often colorful synonyms of "rotting." Before delving into the text I counted ten Iowans in the index, but did not recognize three others (more on them later),

and the index did not include the textual reference to “the little old lady from Dubuque” —certainly an indexer’s quandary.

Kauffman is a libertarian and a pacifist. He champions the Waterloo Republican congressman H. R. Gross, who would not support the Indochina War because it was too expensive, but has nothing but contempt for the current regime and previous purveyors of American global hegemony. His earlier book on pre-World War II isolationism, *America First!*, argued that the movement led by Mason City cement tycoon and American Legion commander Hanford MacNider deserves rehabilitation. In this book, he demands the same for conservative anti-war activists from 1812 to 2008.

All of Kauffman’s chapters are fascinating, and he leaves no anecdote untold. But the addition in the subtitle, “and middle American anti-imperialism,” leaves enough weasel room to drive truckfuls of liberals and radicals through. George McGovern does hail from “Middle America,” and he apparently does have a stable marriage, but as even Kauffman admits, he’s a liberal. Or as the progressive journal *In These Times* suggested in the late 1970s, he straddled liberalism and radicalism. William Appleman Williams (a native of Atlantic, Iowa), may have been put off by aspects of the New Left, but a historian who wrote a book lamenting the neglect of Karl Marx in America (*The Great Evasion*) can hardly be called conservative. (I agree with Kauffman that Williams’s rehabilitation of Herbert Hoover’s reputation can be attributed partly to “Iowa patriotism.” Nicholson Baker’s *Human Smoke* has also recently burnished Hoover’s peace credentials.)

Kauffman does seem to have an affinity for Iowa; he warmly reviewed Mildred Kalish’s and Dwight Hoover’s childhood farm memoirs in the *Wall Street Journal* in 2007. He cites Ruth Suckow’s *Country People* German farmers as conservatives who opposed World War I (not that Suckow was a conservative, but her fictional characters were). He credits Iowa Senator Charles Grassley for voting against the first Gulf War, but calls him “inarticulate” —Iowans have long since figured out that Grassley is not really as inarticulate as he makes himself appear—and applauds moderate Republican congressman Jim Leach for opposing Gulf War II. (Leach was politically close to the first President Bush, and supported Gulf War I.)

Kauffman’s book introduced me to three Iowans: Garrett Garrett, who wrote isolationist editorials for the *Saturday Evening Post*; Vivien Kellems, who as CEO of a middle-sized company conducted a one-woman campaign against federal income tax withholding; and Allan Carlson, a researcher for the Howard Center on the Family, Religion,

and Society, who has shown the deleterious effects of military life on American families.

The final chapter was not just anticlimactic, but verged on trivializing the argument. Ancillary effects of wartime exigency, such as daylight savings time, standard time, military child care, and income tax withholding, just do not seem significant compared to the starker and more destructive effects of war. Racism is the glaring sin not just of conservatism but of the country at large, and Kauffman frankly admits this. As dazzling as the book is in showing middle American obstinacy against overseas adventurism, Kauffman fails to explain how the ordinary Americans he so empathizes with are cut out of decision making. I find Harry Braverman (on twentieth-century workers) and Richard Sennett (on the current workforce) more persuasive on the effects of centralization and militarization than Kauffman's defense of parochialism.

After writing an article about radical pacifism at William Penn College in the 1940s, I learned from a friend who had attended a Jasper County Republican forum in 1968 that the Korean War-era draft resister with the iconic Iowa name of Herbert Hoover had continued his activism by running for president as a Republican antiwar candidate for president. That is the kind of defiance of dominant power that Kauffman celebrates. Anyone looking for an Iowa that does not always add up to being the most middle of middle America should mine this book.

The State of Disunion: Regional Sources of Modern American Partisanship, by Nicole Mellow. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008. viii, 228 pp. Maps, tables, graphs, appendixes, notes, index. \$55.00 cloth, \$25.00 paper.

Reviewer Gregory L. Schneider is associate professor of history at Emporia State University in Kansas. He is the author of *The Conservative Century: From Reaction to Revolution* (2008).

Nicole Mellow has produced a solid study of how region affects partisanship in contemporary America. Since the late 1960s and early 1970s, Mellow contends, regionalism has produced a country deeply divided along political lines best understood by an analysis of geographic regions and the differentiation between those regions' "material and cultural experiences" (3).

Mellow focuses on three major issues that showcase the divide: trade policy, welfare, and abortion. She has studied these issues over time within four regions: North (17 states stretching from Maine to